STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

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FOREWORD

On December 21, 2001, the Chief of Staff of the Army tasked the U.S. Army War College to identify the strategic leader skill sets for officers required in the post-September 11th environment. The following report is the result of that tasking. Dr. Leonard Wong, assisted by four U.S. Army War College students, reviewed the strategic leadership literature, interviewed corporate leader developers, analyzed the leader development system, and gathered the views of key leader developers in the Army. They distill the essence of strategic leadership into six metacompetencies that not only describe strategic leadership, but also provide aiming points for an integrated leader development system.

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SUMMARY

The strategic leadership literature in both the academic and military contexts is replete with long lists of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by strategic leaders of the future. Unfortunately, long comprehensive lists are problematic. At the individual level, it is difficult to assess one's leadership ability when the lists suggest that a strategic leader must "Be, Know, and Do" just about everything. At the institutional level, the long lists make it difficult to focus an institution's attention and resources on leader development when the desired endstate is so broad. Hence, the task of identifying the competencies of future strategic leaders becomes one of reducing the lists to a few metacompetencies that will prove useful in: a) directing leader development efforts in the process of producing leaders with strategic leader capability, and b) facilitating self-assessment by officers of their strategic leader capability. Looking across the existing literature on strategic leadership, the current lists of Army strategic leader competencies, and the future environment of the Objective Force, six metacompetencies can be derived: *identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior*, and *professional astuteness*. These metacompetencies describe the strategic leadership necessary for the future Army.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

On December 21, 2001, the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) tasked the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) to identify the strategic leader skill sets for officers required in the post-September 11th environment. In his charter guidance, the CSA specifically stated:

> The first of the critical areas to be examined is the identification of strategic leader skill sets for officers in the post-September 11th environment, and those necessary to meet the leadership requirements of the Objective Force. In conducting the study, the student study team must start with the Army Training and Leader Development (ATLD) Panel (Officer) recommendations as a baseline, and build on the great work already done in this arena. In addition to strategic skill sets, the required knowledge and attributes of the future Objective Force leader should also be discussed.

A research group of four students and a faculty advisor completed the following report after extensive research and analysis. Research visits conducted by the team included the Center for Army Leadership, the Objective Force Task Force Office, the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, U.S. Army Cadet Command, the U.S. Military Academy, Training and Doctrine Command headquarters and schools, and the leader development offices in the Offices of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) and Operations and Plans (DCSOPS). Additionally, the group consulted with leader development experts in organizations such as the Center for Creative Leadership, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Strategic Leadership Solutions.

Assumptions.

The CSA charter began by stating the need to identify the skill sets required of future strategic leaders. Before identifying these skill sets, however, it is useful to define what a strategic leader of the future actually means. Ironically, "strategic" is often used at both ends of the hierarchical spectrum. It is not uncommon to hear of the "strategic Captain" or "strategic Corporal" guarding the Brcko Bridge. This use of "strategic" broadens the definition to such a degree that *all* soldiers should be strategic. On the other hand, "strategic" is often used in the narrow sense with the view that the Army's strategic leadership resides solely in the general officer ranks. An even more narrow interpretation views strategic leaders only at the 3-star level and above.

This report assumes that future strategic leader capability will be required at the Brigade-level commander (i.e., the Stryker Brigade Combat Team level) or the O-6 level staff officer who will have increased strategic responsibilities. This distinction is important for several reasons. First, stating that strategic leader capability, but not necessarily strategic leadership, is required at the O-6 level recognizes that senior officers will need to think strategically, even if they are not in troop leading positions. For this study, "strategic" refers to a way of thinking—not just a level of war beyond tactical and operational. Strategic leader capability is required in those officers who have increased responsibility for an organization, who are concerned with internal as well as external spheres of influence, and who are surrounded by ambiguity and complexity.[1] Second, shifting strategic leader capability down to the colonel level greatly expands the target population of any leader development efforts. Strategic leader development must become more deliberate if the number of officers requiring strategic leader capabilities increases from 300 general officers to several thousand colonels.

The use of the phrase "strategic leader capability" has significant implications. It recognizes that although not all colonels or general officers are in strategic leader positions, they still can (and should) possess a level of strategic leader capability. Strategic leader capability also implies a potential that is not instantly acquired, but needs to be developed and matured over time.

This report also assumes that the comprehensive Army Training and Leader Development

(ATLD) Panel (Officer) report adequately covered the development of direct and organizational levels of leadership. Thus, there is no reason to examine the development of leadership competencies other than strategic leadership competencies. This report also assumes that the leadership competencies required at the direct and organizational levels will be resident in emerging strategic leaders.

Finally, this report assumes that a post-September 11th environment is the same as the Objective Force environment. Both environments involve breaking the linear method of warfare and allowing the Nation to directly apply operational maneuver from strategic distances through the use of joint and coalition forces. Both perspectives require strategic leaders capable of handling a more complex, uncertain, and global security environment.[2]

Strategic Leadership.

The search for strategic leader competencies[3] is a natural progression of the research in the field of leadership. In the late 1980s, some social science researchers began to question whether leadership actually made a difference in organizations while others suggested that perhaps the study of leadership had reached its culminating point. Rather than disappearing, however, the study of leadership took on new energy with an emphasis on leadership of organizations, rather than the traditional leadership approaches that focused on face-to-face interaction at lower levels. Studies of transformational leadership, organizational culture, visionary leadership, organizational change, and charismatic leaders reinvigorated the field of leadership. Thus, the notion of *strategic* leadership was introduced.

While lists of leadership competencies were very popular in the 1980s, the most recent literature distills strategic leadership to a few key skills and competencies or a process. For example, Stephen Covey states that strategic leaders have three basic functions: pathfinding, aligning, and empowering.[4] *Pathfinding* deals with tying the organization's value system and vision with the mission and environment through a strategic plan. *Aligning* consists of ensuring the organizational structure, systems, and operational processes all contribute to achieving the mission and vision. *Empowering* is igniting the latent talent, ingenuity, and creativity in the people to accomplish the mission.

Other leadership theorists bring up aspects of strategic leadership not included in Covey's typology. In his research on future strategic leadership, James F. Bolt focuses less on the environment and more on the leader.[5] He argues that there are three dimensions of a leader: business, leadership, and personal effectiveness. The *business* dimension has been traditionally the focus in executive development. This dimension includes the creation of new kinds of organizations, leading change, and how the organization works. The *leadership* dimension has typically been overlooked because many people do not believe it can be taught. According to Bolt, this dimension is developed by the study of a broad range of classical and contemporary leadership theories and skills. The *personal effectiveness* dimension, according to Bolt, has been neglected because of the widespread view that work and personal matters must be separated. The personal dimension concentrates on helping to clarify and develop an individual's purpose, vision, values, and talents. The emphasis on self-reflection is found in the "self-leadership" literature that is becoming popular and is actually as old as Thales ("Know thyself") or Shakespeare ("To thine own self be true.").

A related aspect emerging in the strategic leadership literature is *self-efficacy*.[6] Self-efficacy refers to individuals' judgments about their perceived capabilities for performing specific tasks. Self-efficacy is the result of life experiences that teach one that one can, in fact, take actions that will effectively have an impact on one's environment. This concept parallels the findings of the Army Training and Leader Development (ATLD) Panel. In the ATLD report, one of the two leadership competencies for the 21st century is *self-awareness*. Self-awareness is the ability to assess abilities, determine strengths in the

environment, and learn how to sustain strengths and correct weaknesses. The ATLD report also argues that a key leader competency is *adaptability*. According to the panel, adaptability is the ability to recognize changes to the environment, to determine what is new, what must be learned to be effective, and includes the learning process that follows that determination.[7]

Karl Weick states that in a world of uncertainty and doubt, leaders must focus on certain properties. Two of those properties are improvisation and lightness.[8] *Improvisation* involves the flexible treatment of preplanned material. It is not about making something out of nothing. Instead, it is about making something out of previous experience, practice, and knowledge. Improvisation is something that is almost intuitive to good leaders at the tactical level, but seldom is addressed at the strategic level.

Weick's novel concept of *lightness* refers to the ability to drop heavy tools that are no longer useful. Weick's analogy is the foreman who yells, "drop your tools," to wildland firefighters who are trying to outrun an exploding fire. Firefighters who refuse to drop heavy tools such as chainsaws are prone to be overtaken by the fire and perish (as has happened at least 23 times since 1990). To strategic leaders, the now-unwieldy tools are those that presume the world is stable, knowable, and predictable. Future strategic leaders must be able to drop outmoded perspectives, methods, or assumptions in a world of uncertainty.

In their review of strategic leadership, Kim Boal and Robert Hooijberg distill the essence of strategic leadership to three factors—effective strategic leaders must create and maintain absorptive and adaptive capacity in addition to obtaining managerial wisdom.[9] *Absorptive capacity* involves the ability to learn by recognizing new information, assimilating it, and applying it. *Adaptive capacity* involves the ability to change due to variations in conditions. *Managerial wisdom* consists of discernment and intuition. Boal and Hooijberg's assertion that absorptive and adaptive capacities are required at the strategic level of leadership is very similar to the Army's emphasis on self-awareness and adaptability. Although the Army competencies are intended to apply to all levels of leadership, not just strategic leaders, it is interesting to see the parallel development of parsimonious leader capabilities in both the military and academic literature.

Strategic Leadership in the Military.

In 1991, the U.S. Army War College hosted a conference on the fledgling field of strategic leadership. At that conference, strategic leadership aspects were based on Jaques's Stratified Systems Theory (SST).[10] SST essentially argues that there are critical tasks that must be performed by leaders in effective organizations. At each higher level in an organization, these tasks become increasingly complex and qualitatively different. Consequently, leaders at the strategic levels must have higher levels of *cognitive complexity*—the ability to deal with abstract, longer timeframe concepts. The influence of SST on the Army War College (and the broader Army) is evident with the emphasis on *cognitive complexity* that permeates much of the strategic leadership instruction.

In its *Strategic Leadership Primer*,[11] the Army War College provides a list of strategic leader competencies using the "Be, Know, Do" typology. The list is extremely comprehensive and appears to capture every possible aspect of leadership.

BE (Disposition – values, attributes):

- The Values Champion—the standard bearer beyond reproach
- Master of the Strategic Art—ends, ways, means
- Quintessential Student of History
- Comfortable with Complexity
- High Personal Stamina—physical, mental, stress management
- Skilled Diplomat
- Possesses Intellectual Sophistication—alternative frames of reference, pattern recognition, and able to see 2d, 3rd, and 4th-order effects.

KNOW (Disposition – skills):

Conceptual—

- Envisioning-anticipating the future, proactive thinking—practices critical, creative, reflective thinking
- Frame of Reference Development—including systems understanding, scanning, pattern recognition
- Problem Management—competing issues, no right answers, ability to recognize and ignore irrelevant issues
- Critical Self-Examination
- Critical, Reflective Thought
- Effective within Environment of Complexity
- Skillful Formulation of Ends, Ways, Means.

Interpersonal—

- Communication—to a much broader audience; negotiations, consensus-building across a variety of stakeholders; systems knowledge; sophisticated persuasion skills
- Inspire Others to Act
- Organizational Representation—to internal and external audiences/stakeholders
- Skillful Coordination of Ends, Ways, Means
- Master of Command and Peer Leadership.

Technical—

- Systems Understanding—political, economic, cultural, logistical, force management, and joint/combined interrelationships, etc.
- Recognize and Understand Interdependencies—systems, decisions, organizations, etc.
- Information-age Technological Awareness—next generation awareness, sophisticated time/space selection
- Skillful Application of Ends, Ways, Means.

DO (Action – influencing, operating, and improving):

- Provide for the Future—visioning (long-term focus, time span, perspective)
- Initiator of Policy and Directive
- Shape the Culture—Values-based organization, leverage diversity, understanding and accepting differences, multiple perspectives
- Teach and Mentor the Strategic Art
- Manage Joint/Combined and Interagency Relationships
- Manage National-Level Relationships
- Represent the Organization
- Leverage Technology
- Lead and Manage Change—creating and building "learning organizations"
- Build Teams and Consensus at Strategic Level (can't dictate action at this level)—co-opting, coalition building, negotiating, etc.
- Practice the Strategic Art—allocate resources, develop and execute strategic plans derived from the interagency process.

Similarly, in FM 22-100, *Army Leadership*, the Army's doctrinal leadership manual, the skills and actions required of strategic leaders are a cumulative list of 41 competencies addressing the direct, organizational, and strategic levels.[12] Twenty-one competencies are provided for the strategic level alone:

FM 22-100, Army Leadership:

Strategic Level Skills and Actions—

- Communicating
- Using dialogue
- Negotiating
- Achieving consensus
- Building staffs
- Envisioning
- Developing frames of reference
- Strategic art
- Motivating
- Leveraging technology
- Executing
- Communicating a vision

- Developing
- Decisionmaking
- Leading change
- Strategic planning
- Learning
- Strategic assessing
- Translating political goals into military objectives
- Building
- Dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity.

In one sense, the Army War College and FM 22-100 lists of strategic leader competencies are *too* comprehensive. At the individual level, it is difficult to assess one's leadership ability when the lists suggest that a strategic leader must be, know, and do just about everything. At the institutional level, the lack of parsimony makes it difficult to focus an institution's attention and resources on leader development when such a broad array of competencies is advocated. Hence, the task of identifying the competencies of future strategic leaders becomes one of reducing the lists to a few *metacompetencies*[13] that will prove useful in: a) directing leader development efforts in the process of producing leaders with strategic leader capability, and b) facilitating self-assessment by officers of their strategic leader capability.

Looking across the existing literature on strategic leadership, the current lists of Army strategic leader competencies, and the future environment of the Objective Force, six meta-competencies can be derived: *identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior*, and *professional astuteness*. Before addressing each metacompetency, it should be noted that concentrating on just six does provide focus, but there are some associated disadvantages. First, some skills and abilities are not explicitly described by a metacompetency label. For example, strategic leaders need to be politically savvy—knowing when to compromise, understanding that many strategic decisions are not black and white, and knowing what is best in the long run for the Nation and the Army. This ability is captured in the professional astuteness metacompetency description, but is not obvious in the words professional astuteness. Understanding the meaning and intent behind each metacompetency is much more important than creating a catchy mnemonic containing the first letter of each of the six labels. Similarly, the metacompetency labels may be misinterpreted if separated from their descriptions. For example, cross-cultural savvy includes the ability to work across organizational boundaries, but the metacompetency can be narrowly misinterpreted to refer to working only across national boundaries. In other words, the six metacompetency labels were not developed as a stand-alone list. The concepts behind the labels, not the labels themselves, are the focal points for leader development and assessment.

The following section describes the six meta-competencies. After a brief discussion of each, the development of each in future officers is examined using the three pillars of leader development—institutional, operational, and self-development. This report is not intended to be an exhaustive explanation of strategic leadership—the civilian literature does that adequately. It is also not intended as a blueprint to overhaul the Army's leader development system. Instead, this report contrasts the future environment with the current status of strategic leader development and suggests some aiming points for leader development efforts.

Strategic Leadership Metacompetencies.

Identity. This metacompetency is derived from the work of Douglas Hall who heavily influenced the conclusions of the ATLD Panel. According to Hall, identity is "the ability to gather self-feedback, to form accurate self-perceptions, and to change one's self-concept as appropriate."[14] The ATLD report uses the term *self-awareness* and describes it as "the ability to understand how to assess abilities, know strengths and weaknesses in the operational environment, and learn how to correct those weaknesses."[15] The metacompetency of identity moves beyond simply knowing one's strengths and weaknesses as connoted by self-awareness. It includes the understanding of one's self-concept as an officer in the Army.

Identity also includes an understanding of one's values and how they match the values of the Army. Identity implies maturation beyond self-awareness as officers come to understand who they are, not just how well they do things.

Identity, as opposed to self-awareness, also brings in aspects of development over a career. In the corporate world, as an executive advances in levels of responsibility, "he or she must learn to change the basis of his or her self-identity away from individual contributions as the basis for self-esteem and toward defining personal value and esteem through the accomplishments of subordinates."[16] In an officer's development of strategic leadership capability, the metacompetency of identity acknowledges that the role of a strategic leader goes beyond personal contributions and shifts to serving as a catalyst for success by subordinates.

The development of the identity metacompetency in officers can begin as early as precommissioning. In the early stages of an officer's career, identity focuses more on the recognition of one's strengths and weaknesses, but it also includes the establishment of a foundation of continual self-assessment and the desire to adjust one's self-concept when needed. In the institutional realm of leader development, identity can be increased through self-assessment tools, simulations, peer evaluations, and coaching. In the operational arena of leader development, identity can be improved through After Action Reviews, 360-degree feedback, Officer Evaluation Reports, rewarding personal growth, and the counsel of a mentor. Finally, identity can be fostered through officer self-development with reading lists and the use of a lifelong plan.

Mental Agility. In addition to self-awareness, the ATLD report recommends that the Army focus on developing the enduring competency of *adaptability*. It is defined as "the ability to recognize changes in the environment; to determine what is new, what must be learned to be effective, and includes the learning process that follows that determination, all performed to standard and with feedback."[17] *Mental agility* builds on the ability to scan and adjust learning based on the environment, and brings aspects of cognitive complexity, improvisation, and lightness found in the strategic leadership literature.

Strategic leaders operate in an environment of ambiguity and uncertainty. Typical strategic situations lack structure, are open to varying interpretations, and potentially pertinent information is often far-flung, elusive, cryptic, or even contradictory.[18] Mentally agile strategic leaders possess the requisite cognitive skills to navigate in this milieu and are adaptable enough to alter their actions and those of their organizations to function in this complex environment.

From a cognitive perspective, strategic leaders must learn how to scan the environment, understand their world from a systems perspective, and eventually envision different futures and directions for their organization. Scanning involves a constant search for information that affects current assumptions, along with the future of the organization. Officers with mental agility search for more information and spend more time interpreting it.[19] They also analyze large amounts of sometimes conflicting information and try to understand why things happen and identify possible courses of action to affect events. Mentally agile leaders know which factors really matter in the big picture; they identify root causes quickly, display a keen sense of priority, relevance and significance, and integrate information from a variety of sources while detecting trends, associations, and cause-effect relationships. Just as important, mentally agile leaders translate complex situations into simple, meaningful explanations that others can grasp.

Mentally agile leaders efficiently gather and process relevant information in order to process it from a systems perspective and then envision feasible futures within increasingly longer time horizons.[20] From a systems perspective, they challenge assumptions, facilitate constructive dissent, and analyze second- and third-order consequences of their decisions.[21] Mentally agile leaders are comfortable making important decisions with only part of the information available. More importantly, they know when to act and when to experiment to validate beliefs

or assumptions. Once mentally agile strategic leaders have scanned the environment, processed information from a systems perspective, and envisioned the future effect of that information on the organization, they then adapt and implement learning mechanisms to alter the processes, structure, and behaviors of their organization to accommodate their envisioned future.

Because the level of the organization rather than the officer's rank determines the nature of problems that will be encountered and the skills required, efforts to develop mental agility must begin early in an officer's career and not be delayed until an officer is about to be placed in charge of an organization at the strategic level.[22] From a school perspective, officers can be introduced to quantitative decisionmaking, critical thinking, and systems thinking during precommissioning and the officers' basic course. Throughout the officer's time at branch schools, simulations allow the officer to adapt and anticipate changing parameters and assumptions.[23] Mental agility can best be improved with a program of instruction that encourages students to develop multiple points of view, consider alternative explanations and argue the merits of competing solutions to complex problems, synthesize as well as analyze, challenge existing frames of reference, and engage in collaborative tasks. In the operational environment, the Army culture determines the amount of discretion given to commanders to encourage innovation and improvisation. Ambiguous scenarios at the combat training centers and job variety in the assignment process also foster mental agility through the operational leader development pillar. Self-development of mental agility can be done throughout a career by activities that stretch the horizons of the officer. Reading future studies, publishing, or even reading business journals can also increase mental agility. Of course, demanding periods of an officer's career (e.g., S-3 or XO time) afford very little time for reading or self-development. Nevertheless, it is possible to improve mental agility through self-development when the opportunity arises.

Cross-cultural savvy. With the increasing frequency of coalition warfare and an emphasis on theater security cooperation, the necessity for *cross-cultural savvy* is obvious. The Army's future leaders clearly need to be well-versed in interacting with cultures outside the U.S. borders. Cross-cultural savvy, however, refers to more than just the ability to work with non-U.S. militaries. The metacompetency cross-cultural savvy includes the ability to understand cultures beyond one's organizational, economic, religious, societal, geographical, and political boundaries. A strategic leader with cross-cultural skills is comfortable interacting with and leading joint, international, interagency, or interorganizational entities. Future strategic leaders must be able to work with a diverse group of people and organizations ranging from 24-year-old congressional staffers, to Northern Alliance warlords, to representatives from non-governmental organizations.

While cross-cultural skills have been desirable in the past, they will be even more critical for future strategic leaders due to several factors. First, globalization has vastly increased interaction with other nations. Second, the global war on terrorism is illustrating that the Army must coordinate closely with other services, agencies, and organizations in the new national security environment. Third, the Army traditionally has been accused of being somewhat inept in its dealings with Congress and the media. As societal exposure to the military decreases, it becomes increasingly important for Army officers to tell the Army story to those outside the Army culture. Finally, although the United States remains the world's only superpower, unilateral military action is becoming less common. Coalitions will continue to be vital to the security strategy.

Cross-cultural savvy implies that an officer can see perspectives outside his or her own boundaries. It does not imply, however, that the officer abandons the Army or U.S. culture in pursuit of a relativistic worldview. Instead, the future strategic leader is grounded in National and Army values, but is also able to anticipate and understand the values, assumptions, and norms of other groups, organizations, and nations.

Cross-cultural skills can be developed in future

strategic leaders as early as precommissioning with courses in foreign languages, international relations, or regional studies. Time spent abroad or interning with various organizations can also help broaden the horizons of officers. In the institutional school setting, joint and interagency issues can be taught along with focused electives on specific regions. Increasing cross-cultural savvy in the institutional arena should move the officer from the introduction early in the career of a general understanding and appreciation of other cultures to gradually focusing later in the career on particular cultures, organizations, or regions.

The operational pillar also plays a key role in developing leaders with cross-cultural skill, especially during the 4-to-15 year-mark of military service. During this period, developing officers should have multiple tours outside the Army's mainstream units. Tours overseas, in higher headquarters staff (Joint Staff, Major Commands), in graduate school or in fellowships or internships with Congress, leading industry partners, and foreign militaries will contribute significantly to developing officers with cross-cultural savvy. Operational deployments also offer a good opportunity to understand and work with different cultures and different organizations outside the military.

While self-development can certainly play a role in improving the cross-cultural savvy metacompetency, it is not the predominant tool because self-development cannot substitute for experience in working with non-Army organizations and cultures. Nevertheless, officers can gain insights through regional and language studies. Additionally, they can pursue diverse readings on nonmilitary organizations. As with all self-development strategies, care must be taken not to assume self-development will make up for the lack of deliberate institutional or operational development. Too often, leader development is relegated to self-development despite the fact that self-development is often the first type of development to be overcome by events.

Interpersonal maturity. Many of the interpersonal skills required of strategic leaders are basically the same attributes used at the organizational level applied at a higher level. For example, much like a junior leader, strategic leaders are expected to display compassion when dealing with subordinates on sensitive issues. However, several interpersonal skills, although based on direct and organizational leadership characteristics, are qualitatively different at the strategic level. Strategic leaders must possess an interpersonal maturity that goes beyond face-to-face leadership. Strategic leaders devote far more of their time dealing with outside organizations and leaders of other services, agencies, and nations. The power relationship between the strategic leader and individuals from these entities is markedly different from the power relationship typically experienced at the direct and organizational level.

Several interpersonal skills become very important at this level. Most important among these is empowerment. Strategic leaders need to share power with their subordinates, peers, and constituents. They must have the willingness and ability to involve others and elicit their participation based on the subordinate's knowledge and skills, because tasks will be too complex and information too widely distributed for leaders to solve problems on their own.[24] An interpersonally mature strategic leader needs to be persuasive and rely less on fiat, asking others to join in rather than telling them.[25] Empowerment implies that the leader is a good listener; leadership at the strategic level is as much collaboration as it is authoritative leadership. Interpersonal maturity implies that strategic leaders do not feel compelled to do all the talking and resist imposing a solution on others unless the situation demands it.[26]

Because of the unique power relationships, the skills of consensus building and negotiation rise to the top of a strategic leader's interpersonal maturity. Consensus building is a complicated process based on effective reasoning and logic which may take place over an extended period.[27] Peers, outside agencies, foreign governments, and other services will not necessarily respond to orders. In essence, the process of consensus-building is insurance that effective reasoning has taken place, and that contentious issues have

been resolved.[28] As part of this process, or even separate, strategic leaders will find that they need to understand the art of negotiation. Again, because many relationships at the strategic level are lateral and without clear subordination, leaders will find themselves in difficult situations where success rests in their ability to negotiate an agreeable solution.

Interpersonal maturity also includes the ability of officers to analyze, challenge, and change an organization's culture to align it with the ever changing outside environment. Strategic leaders must therefore have skills in analyzing cultural assumptions, identifying functional and dysfunctional assumptions, and evolving processes that enlarge the culture by building on its strengths and functional elements.[29] Strategic leaders then need to manage change proactively through the processes associated with embedding their vision within the organization and shaping organizational culture to support the vision. Noel Tichy posits, "As long as a culture fits the external environment, it succeeds, but when the external realities change, the culture has to change as well . . . at certain critical stages, radical cultural shifts are needed, and without leadership, they just don't happen."[30]

Lastly, strategic leaders must have the interpersonal maturity to take responsibility for the development of the Army's future strategic leaders. Therefore, strategic leaders need to teach, coach, mentor, and create an environment where other leaders may do the same. Interpersonal maturity includes the ability to ensure leader development does not get neglected in the pursuit of everyday mission accomplishment.

As with direct and organizational interpersonal leadership skills, interpersonal maturity is best developed in the operational and self-development arenas. The institutional setting can provide a background in leadership theory or specific topics such as negotiation, creating a vision, or managing a culture, but interpersonal leadership must be modeled and coached, not taught in a classroom. Role models, mentors, and coaches become critical to fostering strategic leaders with interpersonal maturity. Self-development of interpersonal maturity can include constant self-assessment as well as leadership studies. It should be noted that, unlike previously discussed metacompetencies, development of interpersonal maturity can be introduced later in an officer's career. Early stages of an officer's career should focus on direct and organizational leadership skills.

World-class Warrior. This is the simplest and most understandable of the six strategic leadership metacompetencies. As a world-class warrior, strategic leaders move beyond tactical and operational competence in the employment of the Objective Force. They understand the entire spectrum of operations at the strategic level to include theater strategy; campaign strategy; joint, interagency, and multinational operations; and the use of all the elements of national power and technology in the execution of national security strategy.

The ability to be a world-class warrior rests upon the foundation of technical and tactical competence formed early in an officer's career. The seeds of this metacompetency are planted in the study of military history and military art in precommissioning. As the officer moves into the field grade ranks, strategic insights in the full spectrum of operations may come from operational assignments in key staffs, during deployments, in simulations, or in the interagency. Additionally, mentoring and coaching can help develop strategic leaders into world-class warriors. From the institutional perspective, the officer increases this metacompetency by establishing a foundation at the basic and career courses and adding a broader perspective with intermediate level education and the School of Advanced Military Studies. The strategic aspects of the full spectrum of operations, however, are mostly introduced at the senior service college level. Self-development can consist of reading professional journals, military history, or taking advantage of online courses and simulations as they become available.

Professional astuteness. In their comprehensive study of the Army profession, Don Snider and Gayle Watkins arrive at one main conclusion concerning the current officer corps:

> The Army's bureaucratic nature outweighs and compromises its professional nature. This is true in practice, but, of greater importance, it is regarded as true in the minds of the officer corps. Officers do not share a common understanding of the Army profession, and many of them accept the pervasiveness of bureaucratic norms and behaviors as natural and appropriate.[31]

Strategic leaders who are professionally astute understand that they are no longer merely members of a profession, but leaders in the profession as the Army serves the Nation. They see the need to develop the future leaders of the profession, work with stakeholders, and communicate this responsibility to future leaders of the profession. In his recent book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins talks about Level 5 leaders—leaders who can transform a company. He writes, "Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious—but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves."[32] In contrast, Level 4 leaders are often effective and charismatic, yet the company falls apart after they leave since Level 4 leaders put their personal success and egos ahead of institutional success.

The Objective Force will need strategic leaders who are Level 5 leaders—those who take responsibility for the Army as a profession. Leaders with professional astuteness get the mission accomplished, but they also have the insight to do what is best for the profession and Nation. This may include having political savvy, knowing when to compromise, or understanding the many constituencies that the Army serves. Additionally, strategic leaders with professional astuteness seek to ensure the officer corps maintains its expertise in national defense as well as adhering to a professional ethic. Professional astuteness is a strategic leadership metacompetency that ensures that the Army deliberately takes the steps to remain a profession, not merely a job, organization, bureaucracy, or occupation.

Don Snider offers a two-stage approach to developing professional astuteness in future strategic officers. In the first phase, or precommissioning and 4 to 5 years of mandatory active service, the precommissioning education and other developmental processes need to create in the future officer at least three identifiable outcomes which may then be matured during the initial period of mandatory service. Those outcomes are:

- An understanding of Army officership (i.e., the role of the officer) sufficiently broad as to allow each individual to find intrinsic satisfaction in one's own self-concept as an officer (initially seen as within an individual Branch or specialty).
- An individual acceptance of the Army profession's ethic; in other words, aligning one's personal concept of duty with the professional ethic such that the future "walk" of the officer will match the moral "talk" of the profession.
- An individual understanding of, and mutual relationship with, the Army profession and its unique role within American society that will motivate the officer toward sustained development and service as a member of that profession.[33]

The second stage of development for professional astuteness is the time after an officer's initial obligation until selection for battalion command. During that period, development occurs in a culture that encourages:

- The freedom occasionally to fail without fatal career consequences.
- "Careers" in which individual officers find professional satisfaction (developing and applying their expertise) out-weighing the personally incurred costs of the Army's bureaucratic nature.
- The pervasiveness of absolute "candor" as the cultural norm with all Army leaders at all levels at all times in interpersonal relations and in official reports and communications.

- More senior Army officers (as seen from each rank) leading by the example of their own moral character, by following and policing the profession's ethic across all of its domains, particularly in issues requiring the individual moral courage to deny oneself, to see what is best for the profession and its effectiveness from the larger perspective.[34]

Conclusions.

In both the civilian and military literature, a plethora of material discussing strategic leadership and strategic leader competencies exists. Part of the difficulty encountered by anyone desiring to adjust leader development or education efforts is the broad array of competencies presented in the literature. This report combines what is known about strategic leadership competencies and integrates it with the characteristics of the officer corps and the Objective Force environment. The result is a list of six metacompetencies for strategic leadership.

In addition to discussing each metacompetency, some leader development methods were presented for each. Several key points concerning development of strategic leadership competencies should be noted. First, all three of the pillars of leader development—institutional, operational, and self-development—are critical to increasing strategic leader competencies. Too often the development of strategic leaders is left to the institutional arena—specifically the senior service colleges. This report emphasizes that these schools build on strategic leader foundations established as early as in precommissioning and should continue with Capstone and the Army Strategic Leader Course. Also, this report posits that the operational pillar includes the assignment process and the Army culture, not just training that occurs in units. Strategic leadership competencies are not just taught in the schoolhouse or learned through events on the training calendar—they are also taught through developmental assignments and through the everyday experiences of officers as they work in the Army culture.

Recommendations.

Although this report focused mainly on determining strategic leadership competencies, several policy implications and recommendations emerge from this analysis.

*Responsibility for the integrated leader development process needs to be assigned***.** Currently, leader development efforts are spread across the Army staff. The staff element that takes responsibility for the integrated leader development process should take a holistic approach that includes development through training, education, and experiences. The personnel process (i.e., strategic human resource management) should not be neglected as a key part of developing strategic leaders.

*Begin growing strategic leader capability at the precommissioning level***.** Several of the strategic leadership competencies begin with seeds sown during precommissioning education. Current accession educational standards are not uniform. Some demands must be placed on officer accession sources to align their precommissioning standards with the future needs of the Army (e.g., every officer must have 2 years of foreign language training).

*Self-development must become more than a reading list of history books***.** Currently the CSA reading list is restricted to Army heritage and history. While these books are worthy of reading, a great many other ways to develop strategic leader capability, other than reading history books, exist. Other topics must be explored (e.g., books from the corporate world), other forums examined (e.g., the Internet), and other activities must be encouraged (e.g., involvement with groups and organizations outside the Army).

ENDNOTES

1. Donald C. Hambrick, "Guest Editor's Introduction: Putting Top Managers Back in the Strategy Picture," *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 10, 1999, pp. 5-16.

2. For a complete description of the Objective Force environment, see The U.S. Army White Paper, *Concepts for the Objective Force,* Washington, DC: U.S. Army, 2002.

3. A competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual that leads to effective or superior performance. It subsumes knowledge, skills, attributes, and abilities (KSAs). Therefore, this report focuses on competencies, not KSAs.

4. Stephen R. Covey, "Three Roles of the Leader in the New Paradigm," in Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and Richard Beckhard, eds., *The Leader of the Future: New Visions, Strategies, and Practices for the Next Era*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996, pp. 149–159.

5. James F. Bolt, "New Skills for New Leadership Roles," in Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and Richard Beckhard, eds., *The Leader of the Future: New Visions, Strategies, and Practices for the Next Era*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996, pp. 161-173.

6. See Marshall Sashkin, "Strategic Leader Competencies," in Robert Phillips and James Hunt, eds., *Strategic Leadership: A Multi-Organizational-Level Perspective*, Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1992, pp. 139-160; Robert Hooijberg, Richard C. Bullis, and James G. Hunt in James Hunt, George Dodge, and Leonard Wong, eds., *Out-of-the-box Leadership: Transforming the Twenty-First-Century Army and Other Top-Performing Organizations,* Stamford: JAI Press, 1999.

7. Lieutenant General William M. Steele and Lieutenant Colonel Robert P. Walters, Jr., "21st Century Leadership Competencies: Three Yards in a Cloud of Dust or the Forward Pass?" *Army Magazine*, August 2001, p. 31.

8. Karl Weick, "Leadership as the Legitimation of Doubt," in Warren Bennis, Gretchen Spreitzer, and Thomas Cummings, eds., *The Future of Leadership: Today's Top Leadership Thinkers Speak to Tomorrow's Leaders,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001, pp. 91-102.

9. Kimberly B. Boal and Robert R. Hooijberg, "Strategic Leadership Research: Moving On," *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 11, pp. 516-517.

10. The conference proceedings are described in Robert Phillips and James Hunt, eds., *Strategic Leadership: A Multi-Organizational-Level Perspective*, Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1992. See Elliot Jaques, *Requisite Organization*. Arlington, VA: Cason Hall, 1989, for SST.

11. Roderick R. Magee II, ed., *Strategic Leadership Primer*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1998.

12. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999.

13. The argument against long lists of competencies can be found in Jon P. Briscoe and Douglas T. Hall, "Grooming and Picking Leaders Using Competency Frameworks: Do They Work? An Alternative Approach and New Guidelines for Practice," *Organizational Dynamics,* Vol. 28, No. 2, Autumn 1999, pp. 37-52.

14. Briscoe and Hall, pp. 48-49.

15. Headquarters, Department of the Army, *The Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study Report to the Army*, *http://www.army.mil/atld*, 2001, p. OS-3.

16. Briscoe and Hall, p. 49.

17. Steele and Walters, p. 31.

18. Sydney Finkelstein and Donald C. Hambrick, *Strategic Leadership*, New York: West Publishing Company, 1996, p. 39.

19. Boal and Hooijberg, p. 531.

20. Emil Kluever, William Lynch, Michael Matthies, Thomas Owens, and John Spears, "Striking a Balance in Leader Development: A Case for Conceptual Competence," *National Security Program Discussion Paper Series* 92-02, p. 5.

21. Gregory Dess and Joseph Picken, "Changing Roles: Leadership in the 21st Century," *Organizational Dynamics*, Winter 2000, p. 30.

22. Kluever, p. 7.

23. The Armor Center and School is a good example of working towards developing mental agility in the institutional setting.

24. Edgar H. Schein, "Leadership and Organizational Culture," in Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and Richard Beckhard, eds., *The Leader of the Future: New Visions, Strategies, and Practices for the Next Era*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996, p. 68.

25. Lawrence A. Bossidy and Marcia J. Avedon, "Getting an Executive View: An Interview with a Chief Executive Officer," in *The 21st Century Executive*, Rob Silzer, ed., San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002, p. 337.

26. Anthony J. Rucci, "What the Best Business Leaders Do Best," in *The 21st Century Executive*, Rob Silzer, ed., San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002, p. 35.

27. Magee, p. 42.

28. *Ibid*.

29. Schein, p. 68.

30. Noel M. Tichy, *The Leadership Engine*, New York: Harper Business, 1997, p. 26.

31. Gayle L. Watkins and Don M. Snider, "Project Conclusions," in Don M. Snider, Gayle L. Watkins, and Lloyd J. Matthews, eds., *The Future of the Army Profession*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002, p. 537.

32. Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't*, New York: Harper Business, 2001, p.21.

33. Don M. Snider, "The [Missing] Ethical Development of the Strategic Leaders of the Army Profession for the 21st Century," conference paper, XIII Annual Strategy Conference, Carlisle, PA, April 10, 2002, p. 2.

34. *Ibid*., p. 3.